

Getting Started with A Classroom Travel Bug

A Guide to Using a
Travel Bug as an
Instructional
Geocaching
Activity

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Introduction

This guide is intended to provide you with basic steps to getting started with using a travel bug as a geocaching activity in your classroom. When we meet people at conferences and presentations that ask about instructional geocaching, one of the most frequent questions we hear is, “How do I get started?” While not a comprehensive list of everything you will ever need to know about geocaching and travel bug activities, it should be enough to help you begin using geocaching as an instructional tool, and provide you with a foundation for designing your own instructional activities. It is developed from our experiences with instructional geocaching and knowledge we have accumulated from many sources.

Shari and Crystal

What you'll need:

- Travel Bug
- Mascot
- Mission
- Geocaching.com Account
- One Accessible Geocache



Travel Bug

A travel bug is a trackable tag that is attached to an item and moved from place to place. Geocachers* help the travel bug move by retrieving it from one geocache, and depositing it in another. It is tracked by registering (activating) it online at geocaching.com, and logging in to follow its movements.

Mascot

A mascot is an item that is attached to a travel bug that helps to provide an identity for the TB. It can be a stuffed toy, a keychain, a trinket, or anything that can be attached to the tag. Some items cannot be attached to a travel bug - explosives, fireworks, ammunition, lighters, knives (including pocket knives and multi-tools), food, drugs, alcohol or other illicit material should never be used as a mascot. Geocaching is a family activity, so mascots should be items that are suitable for all ages. You may want to use your school mascot or something that represents a character in a novel the class is reading.

Mission

A travel bug's mission is determined when the TB is activated on geocaching.com. Although a mission is not required, it is a good idea to create a mission for your classroom travel bug. This gives students a focus when tracking the travel bug, and can provide a theme for instruction. For example, your classroom TB mission could be to travel to a place the class is studying, to the hometown of an author, or the scene of a novel. The mission can be changed if needed, and a new mission can be assigned when the TB has completed one.

Geocaching.com Account

A geocaching.com account is free and will be needed to activate your travel bug. You will also need to access the account to track the TB's progress on its mission (this could be a student helper job). When tracking the TB, you will receive information on its current and previous locations, the distance between stops (and total distance), and a map of its travels. Geocachers who have logged retrieving and placing the TB can add information to the log, such as a description of the location.

One Accessible Geocache

You need access to one nearby geocache (you can locate one using geocaching.com). You can visit the cache as a class or a parent volunteer can make the drop. The cache should be large enough to hold the TB and its mascot. Once it has been placed, log in to geocaching.com to register its location. After that, all that's left to do is track its progress as geocachers move your TB from place to place!

Additional Resources:

Caching In On Learning Wiki: <http://cache-n-learn.wikispaces.com/>

Geocaching Lesson Plans LiveBinder: <http://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=301912>

* Geocaching is a recreational activity where participants locate geocaches using a GPS or GPS-enabled device and coordinates that are posted online. You can learn more at www.geocaching.com.